

Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
November 10, 2004
Preston Community Center

Commissioners present: Dennis Dart, Lee Witter Kahn, Jim Franzel, Alex Kamola, Doug McClelland, Doug Schindler

Commissioners absent: Jean Bouffard, Gordon Bradley, Leonard Guss, Matt Mattson., Julie Stangell, Ole Una

Exofficio members: Amy Grotta

Staff: Kathy Creahan, Bill Loeber, Kristi McClelland, Harry Reinert, Linda Vane, Benj Wadsworth

Guests: Russ Carlsen, Jim Francis, Dan Greiner, Roel Hammerschlag, Julie Keough, Steve Ketz, Bill Kombol, Gene Laughlin, Jeff Madden

Doug McClelland called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Minutes Approval

Motion 1-1104 "To adopt the September 2004 minutes as written."
Lack of a quorum prevented adoption of the minutes.

Chair Report

Doug McClelland circulated the letter that the RFC sent to the Council regarding the budget. It states that the County needs to keep foresters on staff to address the CAO and the management of County-owned forestland.

Staff Report

The Vashon "Island Center Forest" WADNR Trust Land Transfer is moving forward. Staff is beginning the planning process. Staff intends to develop a joint plan that will cover Island Center Forest and the adjacent ecological lands that have been acquired to protect the headwaters of Judd Creek. The plan may also encompass a parcel of forestland owned by King County Solid Waste to the north.

Phase 1 of the harvest on Taylor Mountain Forest is wrapping up today. It looks great. The harvest will resume next fall on the other side of the logging road. Staff is hoping to begin replanting this winter.

Benj distributed copies of the final WLRD Business Plan. He suggested that if anyone has comments, they should submit them independently. Council will be reviewing it in January.

Benj distributed the Comp Plan policy that addresses rural economic development. Council funded a 1-year position in the Executive's office to do a study of the best way to approach this issue. Forestry and agriculture will certainly be a large component of the study. The Comp Plan policy calls for coordination with the RFC. Benj gave a copy of Leonard Guss's white paper to Karen Wolf, who will be involved with the study, for consideration.

Amy Grotta reported that the Forest Stewardship class in Renton wrapped up last week. There have been 4 or 5 CUT applications submitted already by students. The next class starts in January in Carnation. There are a couple of 1-day workshops coming up, one on chain saw safety and one on tree planting.

Staff is working with the WADNR Small Forest Landowners office to develop outreach about the Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP) in King County. FFFPP provides funding for culvert removal on family forests. DNRP will provide GIS analysis to identify a list of small forest landowners with culverts.

In the urban forestry world, Linda Vane is working on a day-long workshop on December 4 at South Seattle Community College called "Urban Habitat Restoration: Making it Happen." It is targeted at citizens involved or interested in urban forest restoration projects. Response has been good. There will be a tour of the West Duwamish Greenbelt hosted by the Nature Consortium. Three members of the Consortium just finished the WSU Forest Stewardship Class and have developed a stewardship plan for an urban forest.

Benj is planning to attend the "Conserving Washington's Working Forests Forum" on November 22 and 23. The forum will bring together people from government, industry and non-profits to discuss the problem and begin working on solutions state-wide. Doug McClelland asked that Benj come back and report to the Commission on the outcome of the Forum.

Kathy Creahan presented to the RFC a proclamation from Executive Sims. The RFC has completed six years of service. Doug McClelland, Jean Bouffard and Gordon Bradley have served on the RFC since its inception and were honored accordingly.

Discussion ensued about planning for next year. Benj has taken a position with the Natural Lands Program and is therefore stepping down as the liaison to the RFC. Linda Vane will take over as the liaison, and Kathy will be attending the meeting as the

Forestry Program lead – so Benj's role will be split between the two of them. There were six meetings this year, but given more limited staff support, it might make sense to have fewer meetings in 2005.

Doug McClelland commented that the most productive meetings are when the RFC is addressing policies that are before Council. Outside presentations are helpful, but it is more important to have time for discussion of pertinent issues. Benj commented that the RFC used committees in the past but has not done so recently. The bylaws call for the formation of an Executive Committee consisting of the Chair, Vice Chair and two members-at-large. It might be possible to have fewer full Commission meetings and form committees to address specific issues. Doug McClelland commented that there will be a need for meetings to discuss the details of implementing the CAO. Doug Schindler commented that it might be appropriate to form a committee that deals with some of the details that other members of the RFC do not have expertise in. Benj commented that it will be important to have someone on the RFC that is staying up-to-date on what's before Council. Doug commented that it is up to the RFC, not staff, to raise the issues and set the agenda.

Kathy asked what time of day would be most appropriate. All agreed that it would be better to meet earlier so that the whole day is not lost. Linda will call the absent members to get their opinion and bring a proposed schedule to the January meeting. All agreed that the Preston location is fine.

Doug McClelland commented that field trips with Council members and important staff are crucial.

Benj conducted nominations for officers. Doug McClelland's term has ended, so a new chair is needed. In addition, the vice-president and two members-at-large positions are vacant. Kathy commented that it is not the chair's responsibility to provide the substance and content of the meetings. Rather, the chair needs to be a good facilitator.

Jim Franzel suggested that Leonard Guss would be a good candidate for one of the positions.

Alex Kamola offered to serve as chair with the caveat that he does not feel that he knows enough about the workings of County government. Jim nominated Alex. Nomination seconded. Julie Stangell and Len Guss were nominated for vice-chair. Dennis Dart and Jim Franzel were nominated as members-at-large.

Doug McClelland commented that he is hoping that Julie Sackett will replace him as the WADNR representative to the RFC.

King County Carbon Study

Benj introduced Roel Hammerschlag. Roel is the Founder and Executive Director of the Institute for Life Cycle and Environmental Assessment. He has been contracted half-time for six months by the DNRP Director's Office to work on the County's greenhouse gas emissions inventory, part of which involves an assessment of the carbon storage potential of King County-owned forests. He has a BS in Physics from MIT. He met Alex on the Taylor Mountain field trip, and Alex asked that he come present to the RFC.

Roel gave an overview of the science and policy of climate change. Most greenhouse gasses come from burning fossil fuels, all of which were formerly plant matter. The two fundamental products of burning fossil fuels are carbon dioxide and water. According to Roel, it is undisputed that climate change is occurring, but it is not clear what the effect on the earth will be. About a third of emissions come from factories, a third from transportation, and the rest from residential heating.

Possible solutions involve reducing emissions by burning less fossil fuels or by extracting the carbon that goes into the atmosphere by growing plants - sequestration. In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was signed in Japan. It requires all developed nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by a certain percentage. The US refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol because they felt it was not fair that it exempted the rapidly developing countries. At this point, China is still well behind the US in the amount of emissions produced. It is estimated that it will take two decades before China and India together surpass the US in emission production.

The Kyoto protocol has a clause that allows countries to offset their emissions by providing for additional sequestration. There is also a carbon credit trading system in place whereby countries that cannot meet their goal are able to trade credits between themselves. The rules of the Treaty only are effective if countries emitting 55% of the world's emission ratify it. It came down to Russia being able to make the Treaty effective or not. Since the Protocol was signed, the Russian economy took a dive, so it seemed like it would be easy for Russia to meet their target and thus ratify. Russia also has immense tracts of forest and is thus able to sequester a great deal of carbon – they stood to gain a lot of financial benefit by signing. Bottom line – forest sequestration became very important to the process. Russia did sign and the Treaty is now effective, but the US is not participating. This could raise issues with the WTO if it determines that the US has an unfair trade advantage due to lack of participation. Lacking federal action, some local governments in the US have decided to take action on their own. The Northeastern governors and the two eastern provinces in Canada have developed a regional initiative to establish targets for greenhouse gas reduction. The three western governors are also working towards some sort of similar program. Washington State has a goal of equaling its 1990 emissions by 2010 and going 10% below the 1990 emissions by 2020. King County is participating in the International Council for Local

Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), Cities for Climate Change Protection program, a coalition of cities and counties throughout the nation that want to address the issue.

Roel has completed a draft study looking at the amount of emissions produced by King County government. The majority comes from solid waste treatment. The County treats all of the solid waste in the County with the exception of Seattle's. The vehicle fleet, particularly Metro busses, contributes a lot as well. There is not much that the County can do to reduce these sources. The County has already introduced busses that run on biofuel. Given that it would be difficult to reduce emissions, it is likely that sequestration will play a role. Northern forests are better for sequestration than forests farther south. This is due to the size of the trees and the composition of the soil.

Roel showed several graphs comparing the amount of sequestration potential compared to the amount of emissions. There are far more emissions than there is sequestration potential. We cannot rely on sequestration to solve the problem. Research into the carbon storage potential of wood products is still in its infancy. If forests are turned into dimensional lumber that is stored in houses for 100 years, that helps, but if it is turned into paper that is burned, it does not. Working forests can help with sequestration depending on how they are managed. Longer rotations are more helpful.

Doug asked what the RFC can do with regard to this effort. They need to stay in touch with the County and better understand what forest practices will have a positive impact on sequestration. They should always ask what the carbon impact of a decision will be. Roel suggested staying in touch with Doug Howell who is overseeing the project for DNRP. Alex asked that Roel provide the RFC with a copy of the final report.

Community Fire Planning demo project

Kristi McClelland introduced the Carnation Fire Planning demo project. Through the process of developing the CAO, it has become clear that the County needs to make it possible for landowners to manage their forests for fire prevention. The Council put a policy in the Comp Plan that calls for a demonstration project to address the issue. Kristi has been working with a group from the Tolt Highlands and Lake Joy to develop a fire prevention plan for their community.

Dan Greiner discussed the origins of the group. He was asked to serve on the fire committee of the Carnation Citizens Corp. The group began their efforts in the spring of 2004. Their goal is to protect their community. If their effort turns into a demonstration, that is fine, but it is not their goal. They would welcome the help of the RFC to enable their efforts to protect the community.

Jeff Madden gave some more history with a Powerpoint presentation. Concern about fire started when there was a small brush fire in the summer of 2003. That fall, an ice storm caused a lot of trees to fall and increased the fuel load. The forest on Tolt Highlands is not healthy. The new homeowners do not understand forest management. The group is called the Tolt Triangle Fire Council. The included area is based on the geography of the area. There are 623 addresses in the area. The first step was for WADNR to do a firewise assessment. With few exceptions, all of the homes are in a high hazard area. The main issues are the fuel loading and the limited access to the area. The group is hoping to complete their plan by February and submit it to the federal government to become an official Firewise Community. They have already submitted a grant to better maintain the access road. They also plan to develop some educational materials and create a website.

There is still concern about the difficulties of undertaking the necessary activities if it is necessary to go through DDES. The reason that they are presenting to the RFC is to ask for help in facilitating the permit process at the County level.

Discussion ensued about the extent to which the CAO limits forestry activities. It does not. It is actually easier to do forest practices under the new rules than it was under the old rules.

Doug McClelland asked what the group wants in terms of assistance with the permitting process. They want the process to be simple and easy.

Kristi commented that Eastside Fire and Rescue has been very helpful in the process.

Harry Reinert commented that the County really wants to promote firewise practices, and DDES is committed to working on ways to make it happen.

Critical Areas Ordinance – final update

Harry Reinert commented that the final ordinance allows landowners to practice forestry without having a moratorium applied to the part of the property that is going to be developed. Also, King County will follow the WADNR Forest Practice Rules when regulating forestry activities. This includes the regulation of forest roads, which will not be subject to the surface water manual standards.

Alex asked if there will be a user friendly manual for the CAO. There will be, but it has not been published yet. Discussion ensued about how the County will implement the WADNR Forest Practice Rules. Harry suggested that the RFC form a small committee to meet with DDES staff to discuss the issue. It would also be helpful if WADNR staff could train DDES staff in the Forest Practice Rules. It could also help if DDES adopted

the same forms that WADNR uses. Alex suggested that the County could contract with WADNR to implement the rules.

Doug asked for volunteers to serve on a committee to work on this issue. Alex and Dennis agreed to help. Dennis suggested that whoever takes over as the WADNR representative should also help.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm.

Next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting is January 12 from 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. in Preston.

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